IN THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended)   An online system of locating a consumer product having specific configuration in an enterprise production pipeline and inventory, comprising:

a locate client process operable to:

receive product configuration data; and

generate a search request message incorporating the product configuration data in response to user input;

an inventory database ~~storing~~ that stores product availability data ~~comprising information about for~~ products that are on the order bank, ~~products~~ being produced, ~~products~~ in-transit to distribution facilities, and products at the distribution facilities; and

a locate server process operable to:

receive the search request message from the locate client process ~~and further operable to;~~

search the product availability data in the inventory database for products matching and substantially matching the product configuration data, ~~the locate server operable to;~~

generate a search reply message containing the matching products; and

return the search reply message to the locate client process.

2.   (Original)   The system, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the search request message and search reply message are XML messages.

3.   (Original)   The system, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the search reply message comprises:

a list of products and respective configuration data; and

a percentage value for each product in the list indicative of the degree of matching between the product and the product configuration data contained in the search request message.

4.   (Canceled)

5.   (Original) The system, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the search request message comprises a list of search criteria and a weighting of each criterion.

6.   (Original) The system, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the search reply message comprises a pointer to an image of each product.

7.   (Original) The system, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the locate server process comprises:

a listener operable to receive the search request message from the locate client process;

a parser operable to receive the search request message from the listener and extract message parameters; and

a searcher operable to search the product availability data in the inventory database according to the message parameters.

8.   (Original) The system, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the locate client process comprises:

a message converter operable to receive a search request document containing search criteria and convert to an XML document having a predetermined format; and

a message client process operable to receive the XML document and convert to an XML search request message.

9.   (Original) The system, as set forth in claim 8, further comprising a response parser operable to receive the search reply messages from the locate server process and generate record set objects therefrom.

10.   **(Currently Amended)** An online method of locating a consumer product having specific configuration in an enterprise production pipeline and inventory, comprising:

receiving a search request message having product configuration data submitted by a user;

formulating a search query with search criteria corresponding to the product configuration data;

searching ~~an inventory database for a product matching the product configuration data, the inventory database containing information about~~ **product availability data associated with** products **that are** on the order bank, ~~products~~ in-production, ~~products~~ in-transit, and ~~products~~ in-inventory **for a product matching the product configuration data**;

generating a search reply message containing any product **determined based on the search of the product availability data to** substantially ~~matching~~ **match** the product configuration data; and

sending the search reply message to the user.

11.   **(Currently Amended)**   The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

receiving the search request message on a predetermined port;

parsing the search request message to extract product configuration data; and

searching the ~~inventory database~~ **product availability data** using the extracted product configuration data.

12.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein receiving the search request message comprises receiving an XML search request message.

13.   **(Original)**   The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

compiling a list of products and respective configuration data; and

providing a percentage value for each product in the list indicative of the degree of match between the product and the product configuration data contained in the search request message.

14.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein receiving the search request message comprises receiving a list of search criteria and a weighting of each criterion.

15.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

receiving a search request document containing search criteria and converting to an XML document having a predetermined format; and

converting the XML document to an XML search request message.

16.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

displaying product configuration information to the user on a web page;

receiving product configuration selection from the user; and

displaying a search result list of product substantially matching the product configuration and percentage matching data on a web page.

17.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

importing in-inventory product availability data from dealerships; and

importing in-process product availability data from an enterprise database.

18.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

incorporating a unique identifier of each substantially matching product;

incorporating product configuration data of each substantially matching product; and

sorting the substantially matching products by descending degree of match between the product configuration data of the products and the product configuration data in the search request message.

19.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 10, further comprising:

receiving a tag request message submitted by the user, the tag request message containing a unique product identifier;

modifying the product availability data associated with the product identified by the unique product identifier in the inventory database; and

generating a tag reply message confirming the completion of tagging the identified product.

20.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 19, further comprising suppressing the tagged product from subsequent search requests.

21.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 16, further comprising displaying an image of the product in response to receiving a user selection input.

22.   **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 16, further comprising displaying detailed information associated with a product in response to receiving a user selection input.

23.   **(Currently Amended)** The method, as set forth in claim 16, further comprising:

receiving a user selection input of a product in the list;

generating a search request message having an unique product identifier associated with the selected product;

searching the ~~inventory database~~ **product availability data** for detailed data associated with the unique product identifier;

generating a search reply message having the detailed data.

24. **(Currently Amended)** An online method of locating automotive vehicles having specific configuration in an enterprise production pipeline and inventory for purchase, comprising:

receiving a search request message having vehicle configuration data submitted by a user;

formulating a search query with search criteria corresponding to the vehicle configuration data;

searching ~~an inventory database for a vehicle matching the vehicle configuration data, the inventory database containing information about~~ **vehicle availability data associated with** vehicles **that are** on the order bank, ~~vehicles~~ in-production, ~~vehicles~~ in-transit, and ~~vehicles~~ in-inventory at the dealerships **for a vehicle matching the vehicle configuration data**;

generating a search reply message containing any vehicle **determined based on the search of the product availability data to** substantially ~~matching~~ **match** the vehicle configuration data, the search reply message including a vehicle identifier and vehicle configuration data of each substantially matching vehicle; and

sending the search reply message to the user.

25. **(Currently Amended)** The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

receiving the search request message on a predetermined port;

parsing the search request message to extract vehicle configuration data; and

searching the ~~inventory database~~ **vehicle availability data** using the extracted vehicle configuration data.

26. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein receiving the search request message comprises receiving an XML search request message.

27.   (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

compiling a list of vehicles and respective vehicle configuration data; and

providing a percentage value for each vehicle in the list indicative of the degree of match between the vehicle and the vehicle configuration data contained in the search request message.

28.   (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein receiving the search request message comprises receiving a list of search criteria and a weighting of each criterion.

29.   (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

receiving a search request document containing search criteria and converting to an XML document having a predetermined format; and

converting the XML document to an XML search request message.

30.   (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

displaying vehicle configuration information to the user on a web page;

receiving vehicle configuration selection from the user; and

displaying a search result list of vehicles substantially matching the vehicle configuration and percentage matching data on a web page.

31.   (Currently Amended) The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

importing in-inventory vehicle availability data from dealerships;

importing in-process vehicle availability data from an enterprise database; and

updating the ~~inventory database~~ **vehicle availability data** with the imported data.

32. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 24, wherein generating the search reply message comprises:

incorporating a unique vehicle identifier of each substantially matching vehicle;

incorporating vehicle configuration data of each substantially matching vehicle; and

sorting the substantially matching vehicles by descending degree of match between the vehicle and the vehicle configuration data in the search request message.

33. **(Currently Amended)** The method, as set forth in claim 24, further comprising:

receiving a tag request message submitted by the user, the tag request message containing a unique vehicle identifier;

modifying the vehicle availability data associated with the vehicle identified by the unique vehicle identifier ~~in the inventory database~~; and

generating a tag reply message confirming the completion of tagging the identified vehicle.

34. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 33, further comprising suppressing the tagged vehicle from subsequent search requests.

35. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 30, further comprising displaying a photographic image of the vehicle in response to receiving a user selection input.

36. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 30, further comprising displaying detailed information associated with a vehicle in response to receiving a user selection input.

37. **(Currently Amended)** The method, as set forth in claim 30, further comprising:

receiving a user selection input of a vehicle in the list;

generating a search request message having an unique vehicle identifier associated with the selected vehicle;

searching the ~~inventory database~~ **vehicle availability data** for detailed data associated with the unique vehicle identifier;

generating a search reply message having the detailed data.

38. **(Currently Amended)** An online method of purchasing a vehicle, comprising:

displaying vehicle configuration data;

receiving user online input on vehicle configuration, including make, model, and color of the vehicle;

receiving user online input to search for a vehicle having the vehicle configuration;

generating a search request message incorporating the user-entered vehicle configuration;

sending the search request message to a locate process, the locate process operable to search ~~an inventory database for a vehicle matching the vehicle configuration data, the inventory database containing information about~~ **vehicle availability data for** vehicles **that are** on the order bank, ~~vehicles~~ in-production, ~~vehicles~~ in-transit, and ~~vehicles~~ in-inventory at the dealerships **for a vehicle matching the vehicle configuration data**;

receiving a search reply message including a list of vehicles **determined based on the search of the vehicle availability data to** substantially ~~matching~~ **match** the user-entered vehicle configuration; and

displaying the list of vehicles.

39. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 38, further comprising:

receiving an online user input selecting a vehicle from the list of vehicles;

receiving an online user input requesting to tag the selected vehicle;

generating a tag request message incorporating a unique vehicle identifier of the selected vehicle; and

sending the tag request message to the locate process.

40. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 38, wherein displaying the list comprises displaying the vehicles in descending percentage of degree of match to the user-entered vehicle configuration.

41. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 38, further comprising:

receiving an online user input selecting a vehicle from the list of vehicles;

receiving an online user input requesting detailed data on the selected vehicle;

generating a search request message incorporating a unique vehicle identifier of the selected vehicle; and

sending the search request message to the locate process.

42. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 41, further comprising:

receiving a search reply message including detailed data on the selected vehicle; and

displaying the detailed data.

43. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 41, further comprising:

receiving a search reply message including a pointer to an image of the selected vehicle; and

displaying the detailed data using the pointer.

44. **(Original)** The method, as set forth in claim 41, further comprising:

receiving a search reply message including a uniform resource locator to a web page containing an image of the selected vehicle; and

displaying the web page specified by the uniform resource locator.